

Ethics & Skills in Buddhist Practice

(KARANIYA) METTA SUTTA

The Discourse on Loving Kindness

(Suttanipāta and Kuddakapātha)

The discourse of *Metta*, loving kindness, explains the path of peace and how to make a strong personality that none can hurt. In the beginning, the discourse describes primary qualities that a person should practice for liberation. Then the discourse illustrates tranquility and finally wisdom. The *Metta* discourse clearly specifies the gradual path of liberation. Everyone can practice these doctrines as much as he or she has effort and wisdom. This sutta can be described as a blessing discourse, a spiritual path and a personal guidance for moral conduct. In short, Metta Sutta is the Buddhist Anthem.

Once upon a time, the Buddha was in *Srāvasti* monastery. Monks were given advice for meditation by the Blessed One, and they were meditating living in forests as they wished. Among them a group of monks having instructions from the Buddha went to the Himalaya for their spiritual development. When they were in the jungle practicing meditation, they were disturbed by some divine beings since those beings couldn't live in their residences because of the monks' higher virtuous qualities. Divine beings did a lot of things to bring fear to the monks such as showing fearful forms, sounds and smells. The monks tried to overcome the problem, but they failed. Finally, they went back to the Buddha and explained everything that they faced. The Buddha taught them the Metta Sutta as a blessing protection and a meditation technique as well. Further the Buddha advised them to go back to the same place and meditate chanting, contemplating on and practicing the Sutta. According to the Buddha's instructions, when they were practicing this Sutta, they could achieve their spiritual goals. By the power of this discourse and monks' good behavior, divine beings were also happy and helped them to fulfill their enlightenment. Since then the Buddha's disciples have been practicing this discourse as a meditation technique as well as a blessing protection. This sutta is like the Buddhist Anthem that can be practiced by anyone to gain peace of mind and a perfect personality.

1. *Karaṇīya mattha kusalena*

He who is skilled in doing good

Yantaṃ santaṃ padaṃ abhi-samecca

And who wishes to attain that state of calm (Nibbana) should act thus

Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca

He should be skillful, upright, perfectly upright

Suvaco cassa mudu anatimānī!

Gently spoken, gentle and humble.

2. *Santussako ca subharo ca*

Contented (satisfied), easily supportable (not a burden to others)

Appa-kicco ca sallahuka-vutti

With few duties, simple in livelihood

Santindriyo ca nipako ca

Controlled in senses, discreet (intelligent /wise)

Appa-gabbho kulesu ananu giddho!

Not stubborn, not greedily attached to families

3. *Na ca khuddhaṃ samācare kiñci*
 He should not commit any slight wrong
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ
 So that other wise men might criticize
Sukhino vā khemino hontu
 May all beings be happy and secure
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā !
 May all beings become happy in their heart of hearts!

4. *Ye keci pāṇa bhūtatthi*
 Whatsoever living beings that exist
Tasā vā thāvarā vā anava sesā
 Weak, or strong, without exception
Dīghā vā ye mahantā vā
 Long or stout
Majjhimārassa khānuka thūlā !
 Medium, short, small or large

Diṭṭhā-vā ye va addiṭṭhā
 Those seen (visible) or unseen (invisible)
ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre
 And those dwelling far or near
bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā
 Those who are born and those who are to be born
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā !
 May all beings, without exception, become happy in their heart of hearts!

6. *Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha –*
 Let no one deceive another
nātimaññetha katthacinaṃ kañci,
 Nor despise anyone anywhere for any reason
byārosanā patighasaññā –
 In anger or ill will
nāññamaññassa dukkhaṃ iccheyya!
 Let them not wish each other harm

7. *Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttā –*
 Just as a mother would guard her only child
āyusa ekaputtāṃ anurakkhe
 At the risk of her own life
evampi sabbabhūtesu –
 Even so towards all beings
mānasā bhāvaye aparimānaṃ !
 Let him cultivate boundless heart for all beings.

8. *Mettañca sabbalokasmiṃ*

Let thoughts of boundless love pervade the entire universe

mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimānaṃ,

Above, below and across

uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañca

Without any obstruction

asambādhaṃ averaṃ asapattaṃ !

Without any hatred, without any enmity

9. *Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno vā sayāno vā –*

Whether he stands, walks, sits

yāvatassa vigatamiddho,

Or lies down, as long as he is a wake

etaṃ satiṃ adhittheyya -

He should develop this mindfulness

brahmametam vihāraṃ idhamāhu !

This they say is the highest conduct as like living in heaven right here and now!

10. *Diṭṭhiñca anupagamma –*

Not falling into (wrong) views

silavā dassanena sampanno,

Virtuous and endowed with vision (insight)

kamesu vineyya gedhaṃ

He discards attachment to sensuous desires

Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punareṭi !

Truly, he does not come again, to be conceived in a womb.

According to Buddhism, the gradual path is explained here including three disciplines those are virtue, concentration and wisdom. First three verses describe fifteen qualities that we practice at the beginning on the path of liberation. They are;

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| 1. Proficiency/ skillfulness | (<i>Sakko</i>) |
| 2. Honesty | (<i>Ujū</i>) |
| 3. Perfectly upright | (<i>Sūjū</i>) |
| 4. Gently spoken | (<i>Suvaco</i>) |
| 5. Gentle | (<i>Mudu</i>) |
| 6. Humble / not conceited | (<i>Anatimānī</i>) |
| 7. Being contented / Being satisfied | (<i>Santussako</i>) |
| 8. Easy to support | (<i>Subharo</i>) |
| 9. Being less busy | (<i>Appakicco</i>) |
| 10. Being simple | (<i>Sallahukavutti</i>) |
| 11. Controlling (Discipline) in senses | (<i>Santindriyo</i>) |
| 12. Discretion / wisdom | (<i>Nipako</i>) |
| 13. Not impudence/ not stubborn | (<i>Appagabbho</i>) |
| 14. Less attachment to families | (<i>kulesu ananugiddho</i>) |
| 15. Having moral fear and Shame for even slightest wrong conduct | |
- (Na ca khuddaṃ samacare kiñci - yena viññuu pare upavadeyyuṃ)*

These qualities are included in the first discipline, virtue within the three disciplines of enlightenment in Buddhism. After describing primary qualities that should be practiced on the path of peace, practicing loving kindness is described in the other six verses in the Sutta. With these qualities a person who wishes to attain peace has to practice loving kindness. Practicing loving kindness is one of the main qualities on the path of liberation. People mostly suffer because of anger. To reduce anger, being kind to everyone is an essential need. It also helps us to concentrate our mind. Last verse describes the way to develop wisdom. Having virtue and concentration, the Buddha's disciple should develop wisdom seeing impermanence. When the Buddha's disciple sees the arising of his experience that he receives through senses, he doesn't go to the extreme of annihilation. Also, when he sees the ceasing of experience, he doesn't go to the extreme of externalism. Without going to 'is' or 'isn't' he sees the world reality that is impermanence with the knowledge of the dependence origination. This is the highest knowledge and realization of wisdom that leads to attain enlightenment.

Buddhism has pointed out two paths those are heavenly path (*Sagga Magga*) and the path of deliverance (*Mokkha Magga*). According to the heavenly path, three meritorious deeds (generosity, morality and meditation) should be practiced with the understanding of the Karmic law. By practicing three meritorious deeds, we are able to increase desire and anger, but not completely. As the result of practicing the heavenly path, we can be reborn in a blissful life. According to the deliverance path, we have to practice three disciplines; virtue, concentration and wisdom. At the beginning of the deliverance path, we should have a very clear knowledge about the dependent origination. Here understanding the five aggregates is very important.

Five aggregates are;

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| i. The group of forms | - (<i>Rūpa</i>) |
| ii. The group of feelings | - (<i>Vedanā</i>) |
| iii. The group of perception | - (<i>Saññā</i>) |
| iv. The group of mental formations | - (<i>Saṃkhāra</i>) |
| v. The group of consciousness | - (<i>Viññāṇa</i>) |

If we have any kind of experience through our six senses such as eye, ear etc, five aggregates arise at the moment. Not only do they arise, but they cease immediately at the same moment. If someone can understand that these five things arise at the moment when conditions are present and they cease instantly when conditions separate, he doesn't go to the extremes as 'there is' or 'there isn't'. When someone sees the arising of the five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of 'there isn't' or 'annihilism'. And also, when someone sees ceasing of the five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of 'there isn't' or 'eternalism'. If someone is skillful to see this reality, he is clever to understand impermanence. The understanding of impermanence leads to overcome suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Further, he realizes all his experiences arise and cease at the moment. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceases at once. **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not**

go to (the future) occurrence. (*ahutvā sambutam hutvā na bhavissati*). It means if we experience something now, that experience didn't come from the past in the same way as now. Also, the present experience doesn't go to the future from the present in the same way. If somebody can understand this reality, he is ready to give up extremes about the past and the future. Also he tries to live in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing wisely with full awareness. However, we shouldn't forget our past or future. We only do not live in the past or future. By practicing mindfulness and wisdom our memory increases and we train our mind to live in the present moment reflecting on arising and ceasing of our all our experiences.

We have to practice above qualities which come in the Metta Sutta with the knowledge of the impermanence of the five aggregates. Then we can go forward on the path of peace of mind. Among all the qualities of the Metta Sutta, three things are very important.

They are;

- Honesty
- Gently spoken (active listening)
- Wisdom

As wise people, we may try to go forward on the spiritual path day by day searching for real happiness. As the result of practicing above four things, other five Spiritual Faculties increase in our life. They are named as the five Spiritual Faculties (*pañca indriya*). They are faith (*Saddhā*), energy (*Viriya*), mindfulness (*Sati*), concentration (*Samādhi*), wisdom (*Paññā*). Meanwhile the Buddha has explained to us that we have to practice only two doctrines, they are mindfulness and wisdom. Ultimately, we have to practice only one which is wisdom. When wisdom is developed correctly as the Buddha said, all other qualities gradually increase. As the result of practicing the path of deliverance, we are able to reduce desire, anger and delusion completely. Also, we can overcome suffering and achieve peace of mind, happiness, satisfactoriness and the bliss of Nibbana.

Real Skills which a person can develop

We can find ourselves whether we are on the path or not by finding out whether these three qualities (loving kindness, honesty and wisdom) gradually increase. The final result of practicing all above qualities is having an unshaken mind. That is the real refuge that we can make in our life as the Buddha said.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

When you dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge, the basis itself should be investigated thus: 'From what are sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair born? How are they produced?' (Attadīpa Sutta).

Then we are able to live without defilements among the ordinary people like a lotus flower which doesn't touch mud.

Let's live happily without anger among the people those who are angry.

Let's live happily without mental illnesses among the people those who are mentally ill.

Let's live happily without longing sensual pleasure among those who are seeking sensual pleasures.

Let's live happily without any impediments even as the deities of the radiant beings.

As the results of this practice, he or she can develop his or her mind to the maximum level in this life itself. If he didn't attain enlightenment in this life, he or she is able to reborn in a higher realm where he can develop other stages of his spirituality. Accordingly, it is very clear that our real success depends on happiness. Furthermore, happiness depends on the average of reducing unwholesome thoughts such as craving, anger and delusion. Reducing of unwholesome thoughts depend on the duration of practicing mindfulness with correct vision.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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